



United States	Forest	Pacific	Regional Office, R5
Department of	Service	Southwest	630 Sansome Street
Agriculture		Region	San Francisco, CA 94111-2214
			415-705-1098 Text (TTY)
			415-705-2870 Voice

File Code: 1950/2500

Date: MAY 27 JUN 01 1998

Lester Snow, Executive Director
CALFED, Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95614

Dear Lester:

As you are aware, we strongly support the need to restore and protect the health of upper watersheds as part of the Bay/Delta solutions. Healthy upper watersheds will provide benefits to downstream areas in three primary ways:

Watersheds with stable, healthy uplands, riparian and wetland areas will provide more reliable water delivery, extend the period of water availability and attenuate peak or flood flows.

Improvement of upper watershed water quality, especially decreasing sediment yields to streams through road and trail maintenance or decommissioning programs, will improve aquatic habitats in the upper watersheds, extend operational reservoir storage capacity, and improve water quality in critical spawning habitats below dams.

Vegetation management programs that reduce forest fuel levels will reduce the risk of catastrophic wild fire. Catastrophic wildfires can result in undesirable flow regimes that increase sediment delivery to reservoirs, increase flood peaks and lead to less reliable season long flows.

We are aware that some interest groups are focusing attention on the possibility of using vegetation management programs on National Forest lands as a means to increase water yields to the state's water systems. The Forest Service conducted an analysis of maximum water yield potential during development of Forest Plans in the 1980's and determined there would be at most a 3% increase in yield over the entire 20 million acres of National Forest Service lands. The vegetation manipulation prescriptions used in the analysis included large block timber clear cutting and conversion of all brush fields to grasslands. These practices are not representative of the type of management the Forest Service currently implements.



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We are enclosing a briefing paper supplied to our leadership that summarizes Forest Service and California Department of Water Resources research on water yield. Based on the information gathered from research and current Forest Service land management activities, we do not support the thinking that vegetation management on National Forests will result in substantial quantities of increased water to downstream systems.

If you have any further questions, please contact our CALFED representative, Julie Tupper at our office in Sacramento at 916-498-53324. We look forward to working with CALFED in developing strategies for improving the health of California's watersheds.

Sincerely,



for
G. LYNN SPRAGUE
Regional Forester

Enclosure